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SUBJECT: TURKEY: ISRAELI CONCERNS ON AHMEDINEJAD VISIT

REF: ANKARA 1405

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) The Israeli Government voiced its concerns to the GOT regarding Iranian President Ahmedinejad's August 14-15 Istanbul visit in both Ankara and Tel Aviv, August 7 (reftel). Israeli Embassy Spokesman Amit Zarouk told us Israeli Ambassador Gaby Levy underscored in his meeting with MFA Deputy Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu that the visit is poorly timed given Iran's refusal to respond to the P5 1 package. In addition, by hosting Ahmedinejad, the GOT is giving legitimacy to a leader who has advocated Israel's annihilation and who had denied the holocaust occurred. Sinirlioglu reportedly responded that the GOT is mildly disappointed by the Israeli Government's reaction. Turkey is a neighbor of Iran and must accordingly have contact, adding the only way to alter Iranian behavior is through engagement.

12. (C) The Israeli MFA delivered the same message to Turkish Ambassador Namik Tan, stated Zarouk. Tan said the GOT has been talking to the Iranian Government for some time, highlighting that the USG is now reportedly doing the same. He also emphasized the failure of the international community to remain united on the issue. As sanctions are not working, Tan asserted direct talks are the only viable option.

13. (C) Noting that the GOI chose to deliver its concerns verbally in lieu of a formal note of protest, Zarouk commented the Israeli Government will not likely raise the issue again unless Ahmedinejad makes provocative comments while in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the Turkish media widely covered news of Tel Aviv's concern as a top international story, warning that Ahmedinejad's visit has strained Turkey's relationship with Israel.

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